

Silence is fallen on field and furrow ;  
 The fowl at his roost, the hare in his burrow.  
 Lie in the arms of night caress'd,  
 But life on the jheel is never at rest.  
 A myriad crickets, the banks along,  
 Up lift to Heaven their whispered song ;  
 A myriad frogs in throaty choir,  
 Sing a last long dirge to the Sun's dead fire.  
 The quick bats flicker and swerve in flight,  
 From the hungry rush of the swooping kite ;  
 And *Sarus* summons his wayward spouse,  
 With cry discordant, to join carouse.  
 But hark ! a new sound thrills the sky  
 Like the rush of the wind in an ecstasy,  
 Or of cloth-yard shafts, as of yore they flew,  
 True sped from the cord of the six foot yew.  
 Nigher it comes, and yet more nigh,  
 A swirl of shadows o'ercasts the sky.  
 They're here ! They've gone ! slow dies the sound,  
 As the duck wing South to their feeding ground.  
 Again that whistle, again the throb,  
 Of the swift-driven wings of that ordered mob,  
 Again the shadows of duck in flight,  
 Glimpsed in the gloom of the gathering night.  
 Gun leaps to shoulder from muzzle a roar—  
 The silence is riven—  
 The duck fear-driven  
 Swing from the flash and skyward soar.  
 But one breaks rank in that rocketing wheel,  
 And swift glissades to the waiting jheel,  
 Hit, hard hit ; the air he thrashes,  
 With strengthless wings—and then he splashes !  
 The splash betrays him—he's gathered in,  
 Or ever to deep reed-haven he win.  
 Again and again is borne on the breeze  
 The whistle and rush of those shadowy V's ;  
 Again, as gun-flash shatters the gloom,  
 The duck wheel up or fall to their doom.  
 And birds, that have settled unseen, take flight  
 On swift-driven pinions into the night.  
 Then follows of wings a drumming more measured,  
 The pace is swift, tho' the wing-beats leisured.  
 The shadows loom larger ; the "*honks*" betray,  
 The grey-geese to water winging their way,  
 The flight is checked as the grey-geese wheel,  
 Choosing their spot on the well-stocked jheel.  
 A shot roars out, another one,  
 And a grey goose drops to a well-held gun.

ROSTAND.

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 No. XVI.—A MUGGER SHOOTING EXPERIENCE.

Some years ago I had an experience when mugger shooting on the River Jumna in the Delhi district, and although I have spoken to many shikaris with regard to this I have never heard from any of a similar one. The facts were as follows : We came across a mugger basking in the sun on a bank at a place where the river was about 150 yards wide. I fired at his neck and hit him,

but just too low to be immediately fatal. The bullet was a .303 soft nosed split and we found afterwards had opened out and caused a large wound in its exit. The mugger rushed in the river and disappeared. A little while afterwards he appeared in the centre of the river at short intervals raising his head and neck out of the water and going down again. My shikari explained that the reason for this was that fishes were nipping at the wound in his neck and his pushing his neck out of the water was to get away from them. The shikari said the fish would probably drive him out of the water sooner or later, so we left the river for over an hour in the hope that this would happen. On returning, however, we found the mugger doing exactly the same thing, so I decided to fire, which I did. I hit him on the head, the bullet glancing off. The mugger made a great swish of water and almost jumped out. Then he lay down on the top of the water and made straight for me. I waited till he was about 3 yards from the bank and then fired between his shoulders. This instantly paralysed him and we dragged him out by the tail. We found even then he was not dead as he held on with his teeth firmly to a lathi and it took a .303 through his brain to finish him. He was a mugger about 13 feet long.

I have never heard of a mugger after being wounded going for the firer, and should be interested to know of any one, having a similar experience.

L. STANSFIELD.

19th February 1924.

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No. XVII.—A NOTE ON THE HABITS OF THE LARGE-SCALED  
EARTH SNAKE *SILYBURA MACROLEPIS*.

This little Earth Snake is very common in Mahableshtar during the rains. It is found chiefly in the rubbish heaps, drains and in the humus of the forest—more commonly at dusk, from which one gathers that it is probably crepuscular or nocturnal in habits, though I have captured one or two during the day. These snakes are most numerous after a shower of rain, which appears to draw them out of their burrows on to the roads and path ways. When alarmed or disturbed in exposed positions these snakes adopt an attitude common more or less to many snakes—they lie perfectly still with the body flattened out to the utmost extent, the object being presumably to escape detection.

The principal food of this earth snake consists of earth worms and small insects, though the former make up the bulk of its diet.

On a walk one evening I picked up one of these snakes and took it along with me. Though extremely slow in movement when on the ground, when picked up it struggled very vigorously. I saw an earth worm on the ground and put the snake down next to the worm to see whether it would attack it. To my satisfaction as soon as the snake noticed the worm it bit it, relaxing its hold immediately afterwards; as the worm continued to wriggle the snake bit it again, whereupon the worm ceased its struggles and lay quite still apparently paralyzed. It might be mentioned here that Revd. Father Caius, S. J., a bio-chemist, who is devoting a considerable amount of attention to the study of snake venoms, informs me that many of the *Silyburidae* secrete a quantity of venom in the parotid glands, which mixing with the saliva, possess sufficient virulence to enable these reptiles to easily overcome their prey. To continue with my experiment, after the worm ceased its struggles the snake commenced swallowing the worm head first. In about two minutes the whole process was complete, a great quantity of earth was forced out of the worm in the act of swallowing, much of which adhered to the mouth of the snake. This the reptile got rid of by rubbing its mouth this way and that on the ground. I picked it up after it had finished its meal, took it home and discovered later that a further quantity of mud had been ejected by the snake after I had put it away.